OSTRANDER, YALE, SNYDER & MARCOS

SUICIDE SQUAD™

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2 The Janus Directive

Part 2 of 11

FIRST BLOOD!

SS™

THE JANUS DIRECTIVE: SCATTERMOVE

NOTE: THESE EVENTS FOLLOW IMMEDIATELY ON THE CLOSE OF CHECKMATE!#5, NOW ON SALE. --ROBERT LUDLUM GREENBERGER

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DAMN STRAIGHT THERE'D BETTER BE A GOOD REASON! AS IF WE AREN'T STEPPING ON EACH OTHER'S TOES NOW--IT'S GETTING SO WHEN A KNIGHT IN THE FIELD SNEEZES, SOME COSTUMED JERK TURNS AROUND AND SAYS "GESUNDHEIT!"
THAT'S WHAT THIS MEETING'S ABOUT, HARRY. AND YOU'RE ON THIN ICE WITH THAT CRACK ABOUT THE SQUAD!
CHEW!

ENOUGH WITH THE BICKERING ALREADY. THE LONGER YOU ARGUE, THE LONGER I GOTTA WAIT TO FIND OUT WHOSE MUGS I'M STARING AT HERE.
I RECOGNIZE EVERYONE IN THE ATOM PROJECT. WHAT I WANNA KNOW IS WHO ARE DA GUYS THAT LOOK LIKE EXTRAS FROM YANKEE DOODLE DANDY?

CUTE, HARVEY. THIS IS THE FORCE OF JULY--ANOTHER GOVERNMENT METAHUMAN GROUP EMPOWERED TO CONDUCT COVERT MISSIONS. UNLIKE PROJECT ATOM, THEY HAVE NO MILITARY AFFILIATION OR BACKING.
ADD IT UP. YOU'VE GOT TWO RIVAL AGENCIES VYING WITH US FOR CONTROL AND POWER. THINK IT'S BAD NOW? IT'S ABOUT TO GET WORSE.

I'VE DISCOVERED A CONSPIRACY CALLED THE JANUS DIRECTIVE. THOSE OF YOU HIP ON YOUR ROMAN MYTHOLOGY'LL REMEMBER JANUS WAS A TWO-FACED GOD. AND ONE OF THESE TWO AGENCIES IS ALSO TWO-FACED.

THE JANUS DIRECTIVE INDICATES EITHER THE ATOM PROJECT OR THE FORCE OF JULY INTENDS TO WAGE WAR ON TASK FORCE X.
I'M NOT WAITING TO FIND OUT WHO. I PLAN ON STRIKING FIRST--WITH DEADLY FORCE.

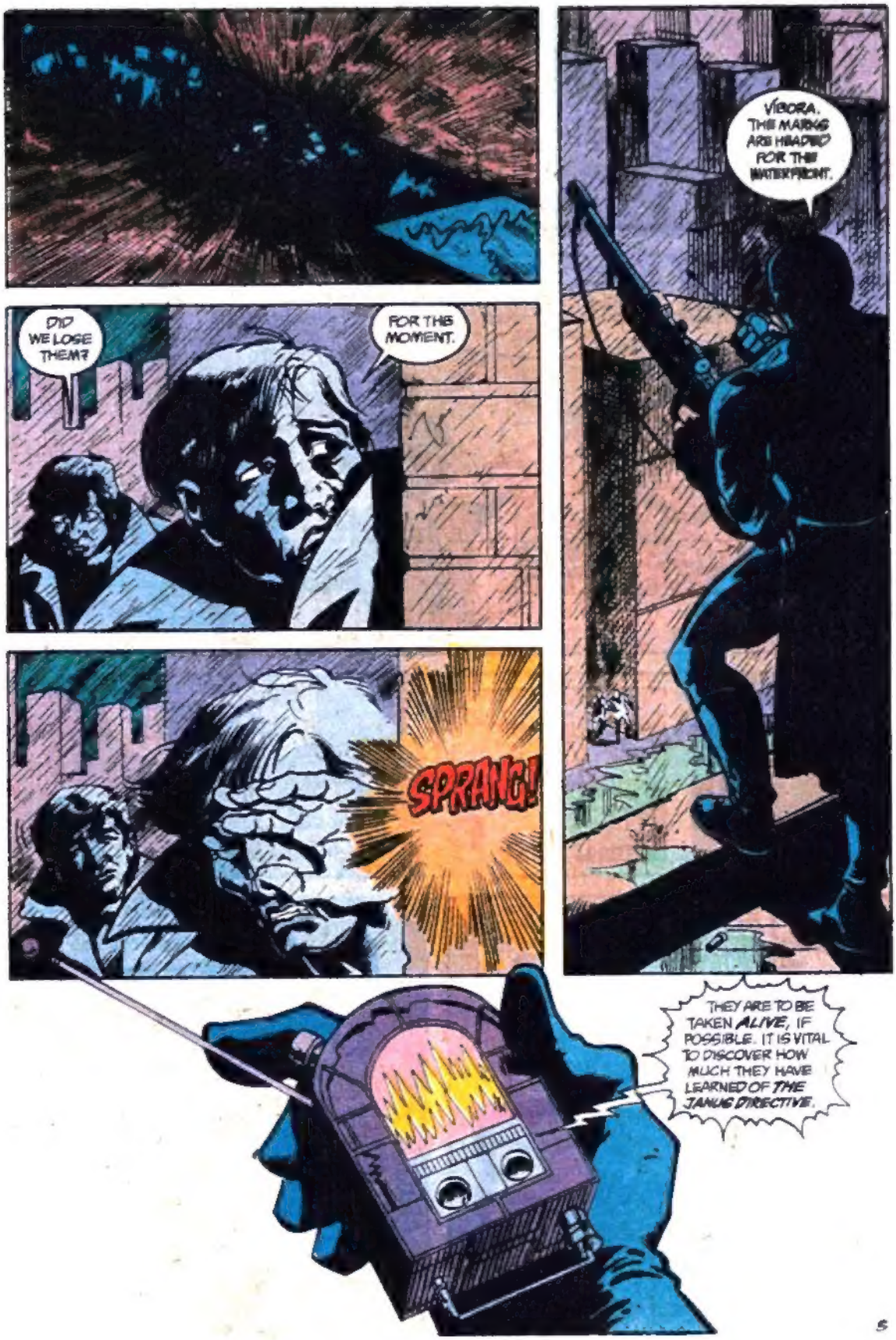
PEACEMAKER AND CHECKMATE WILL TEAM UP TO CAPTURE OR KILL EILING AND MESALA. THAT'LL GIVE US AN ACE OR TWO TO PLAY WHEN MAJOR FORCE AND CAPTAIN ATOM SHOW UP.

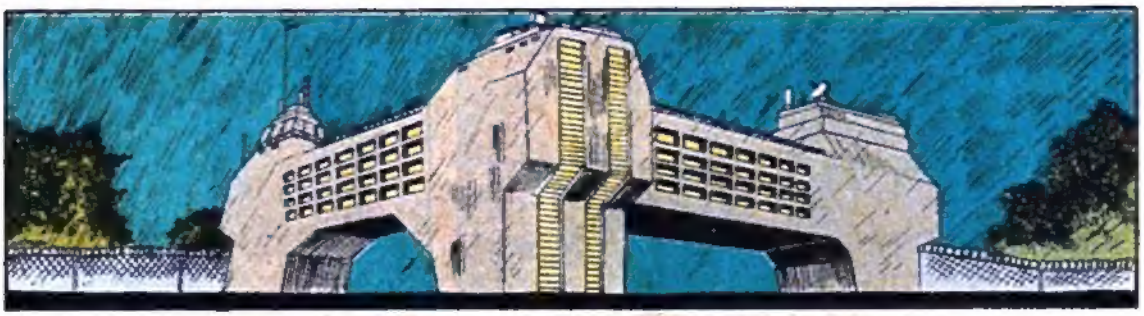
THE SQUAD ATTACKS THE FORCE OF JULY. MAN BY THE NAME OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN CARLYLE ON THE WEST COAST SHELTERS THE FORCE. I UNDERSTAND HE ALSO HAS THE PSYCHO PIRATE'S MEDUSA MASK.
I WANT THAT MASK, BEN. DON'T CARE ABOUT A BODY COUNT.
YOU'RE TELLING ME I SHOULD KILL THE ENTIRE FORCE OF JULY?
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO--KNOCK ON THE FRONT DOOR AND ASK THEM TO COME QUIETLY?

WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS WHERE YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT THIS JANUS DIRECTIVE AND JUST HOW ACCURATE THIS INFO IS.

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW IS THAT I HAVE EVALUATED THIS INFORMATION, THAT I HAVE DETERMINED IT'S AUTHENTIC AND I HAVE CHOSEN THE NECESSARY COURSE OF ACTION! ANYONE WHO CAN'T GO ALONG SHOULD RESIGN NOW. AND I MEAN ANYONE.

THEN THIS MEETING IS ADJOURNED SO YOU CAN PREPARE YOUR RESPECTIVE MISSIONS
MADAME WALLER...
DON'T TELL ME CHRISTOPHER SMITH HAS BECOME A PACIFIST AND DON'T TELL ME THIS MISSION ISN'T IN HIS BEST INTERESTS... USING PEACEMAKER AGAINST PROJECT ATOM IS IN MY BEST INTEREST.
YOU MAY GIVE ME MY ORDERS, BUT I PLAN ON INTERPRETING THEM AS I THINK BEST.
IT'S BOGUS. I CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING BOGUS HERE. I WANT THIS JANUS DIRECTIVE CHECKED OUT, BUT NO ONE'S AVAILABLE-- AND I WON'T PULL KNIGHTS OFF ONGOING MISSIONS TO INVESTIGATE.
BLACK THORN. GET IN TOUCH WITH BLACK THORN AND HAVE HER LOOK INTO THIS ON THE Q.T.
RIGHT. CONTACT VALENTINA VOSTOCK TOO, HARVEY. ARRANGE FOR BOTH OF THEM TO DELVE AND DELVE DEEP.
I DON'T CARE WHAT THE WALL SAID-- WITHOUT A LOT MORE PROOF I'M NOT MAKING THIS A KILLING MISSION. GRAB MEGALA, GRAB EILING-- NOTHING ELSE.
4


DID WE LOSE THEM?
FOR THIS MOMENT.
SPRANG!
VÍBORA. THE MARKS ARE HEADED FOR THE WATERFRONT.
THEY ARE TO BE TAKEN ALIVE, IF POSSIBLE. IT IS VITAL TO DISCOVER HOW MUCH THEY HAVE LEARNED OF THE JANUS DIRECTIVE.



SO MUCH FOR THE GENERAL OVERVIEW. NOW FOR THE PARTICULARS. WE WILL STRIKE FIRST, IN A SURPRISE ATTACK UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS.

TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT OUR TARGET, THE CARLYLE HOUSE. WE'RE FLYING OUT TO CALIFORNIA-- TONIGHT.

INSIDE THAT HOUSE THERE'S A SAFE ON THE SECOND FLOOR HOLDING THE MEDUSA MASK. PUNCH AND JEWELEE, GET INSIDE THE HOUSE AND STEAL THE MASK. HOUSE PLANS WILL BE PROVIDED EN ROUTE IN GS-1.

THE REST OF THE SQUAD WILL TAKE ON THE FORCE OF JULY.

"SILENT MAJORITY GOES TO DR. LIGHT WHILE SPARKLER GOES TO BOOMERANG."
"CARLYLE FALLS TO RAVAN. ALIVE, RAVAN-- PLEASE."
OOOOH! CLOSE CALL, MATE! YOU ALMOST GOT THE KID!
"LADY LIBERTY HAS A TORCH THAT CHANNELS ENERGY-MANIPULATING POWERS. SHADE'S M-VEST AND ITS FORCE FIELD SHOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE HER BEST."
SHUT UP.
"MAYFLOWER'S POWERS OVER VEGETATION WILL BEST BE COUNTERED BY COUNT VERTIGO."
"MAJOR VICTORY IS TEAM LEADER AND THEIR STRONGEST, TOUGHEST MEMBER. DUCHESS WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM."
I AM PITTED AGAINST A LUNATIC BOTANIST. PAH!
VIXEN AND I WILL OVERSEE AND LEND SUPPORT WHERE NEEDED. ANY QUESTIONS?
YEAH -- WHERE'S THE WALL? AND IS THIS A KILLING MISSION?
SHE'S IN WASHINGTON AND WIPE THAT SMIRK OFF YOUR FACE, HARKNESS. THE WALL CONSIDERS THE RECOVERY OF THE MASK PARAMOUNT. SHE'S AUTHORIZED ANY AND ALL EXPENDITURES OF FORCE NECESSARY TO GET IT.
FINAL WORD. THEY MAY LOOK SILLY, BUT THE FORCE OF JULY ARE FANATICS WHO BELIEVE THEY ACT FOR THE GOOD OF THIS COUNTRY, AND THAT'LL MAKE THEM DANGEROUS IN COMBAT. UNDERESTIMATING THEM WOULD BE A BIG MISTAKE.
TAKE-OFF AT YEAGER IN FIFTEEN MINUTES

YOU HEAR FROM ORACLE?
MRS. WALLER WOULD FRY MY HIDE IF SHE KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING, BEN, BUT...YES. I ASKED HER FOR YOU WHAT SHE'D HEARD ABOUT THE JANUS DIRECTIVE.

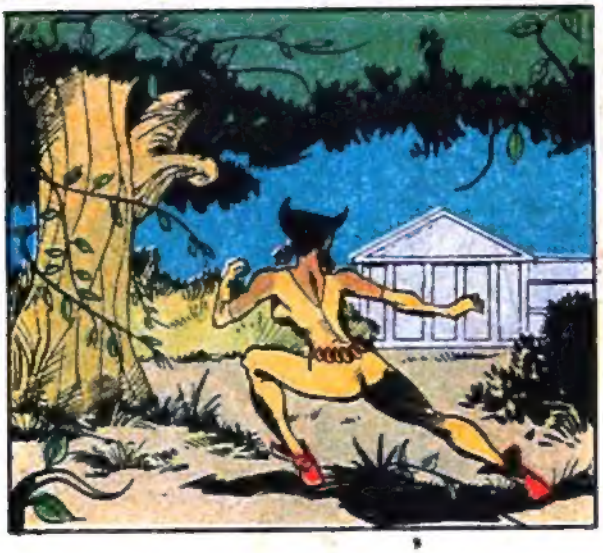
ORACLE HAS HEARD NOTHING, BEN. ORACLE WANTS TO KNOW WHERE THE WALL GOT HER INFORMATION BECAUSE THERE'S "ABSOLUTE ZERO" OUT THERE ACCORDING TO HE--SHE--IT.

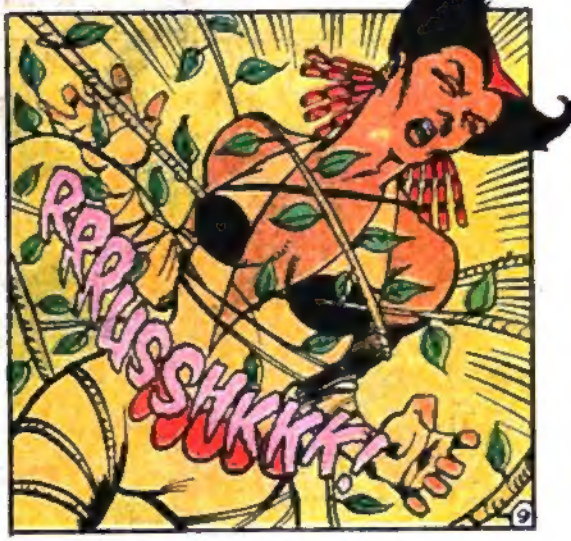
JUST HOW LIKELY IS THAT?
THAT ORACLE CAN'T FIND A SCRAP ON THE JANUS DIRECTIVE? GIVEN THE RESOURCES DEMONSTRATED GO FAR, NOT VERY.

THANKS, FLO. I OWE YOU ONE, GIRL.

YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE YOU DO! AND ONE OF THESE DAYS I AM GOING TO COLLECT!!

YOU KNOW YOUR ASSIGNMENTS. LET'S GO. MAKE IT QUICK AND CLEAN.

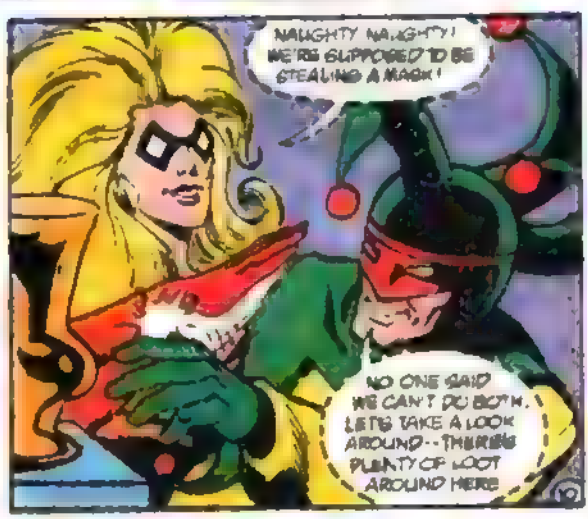


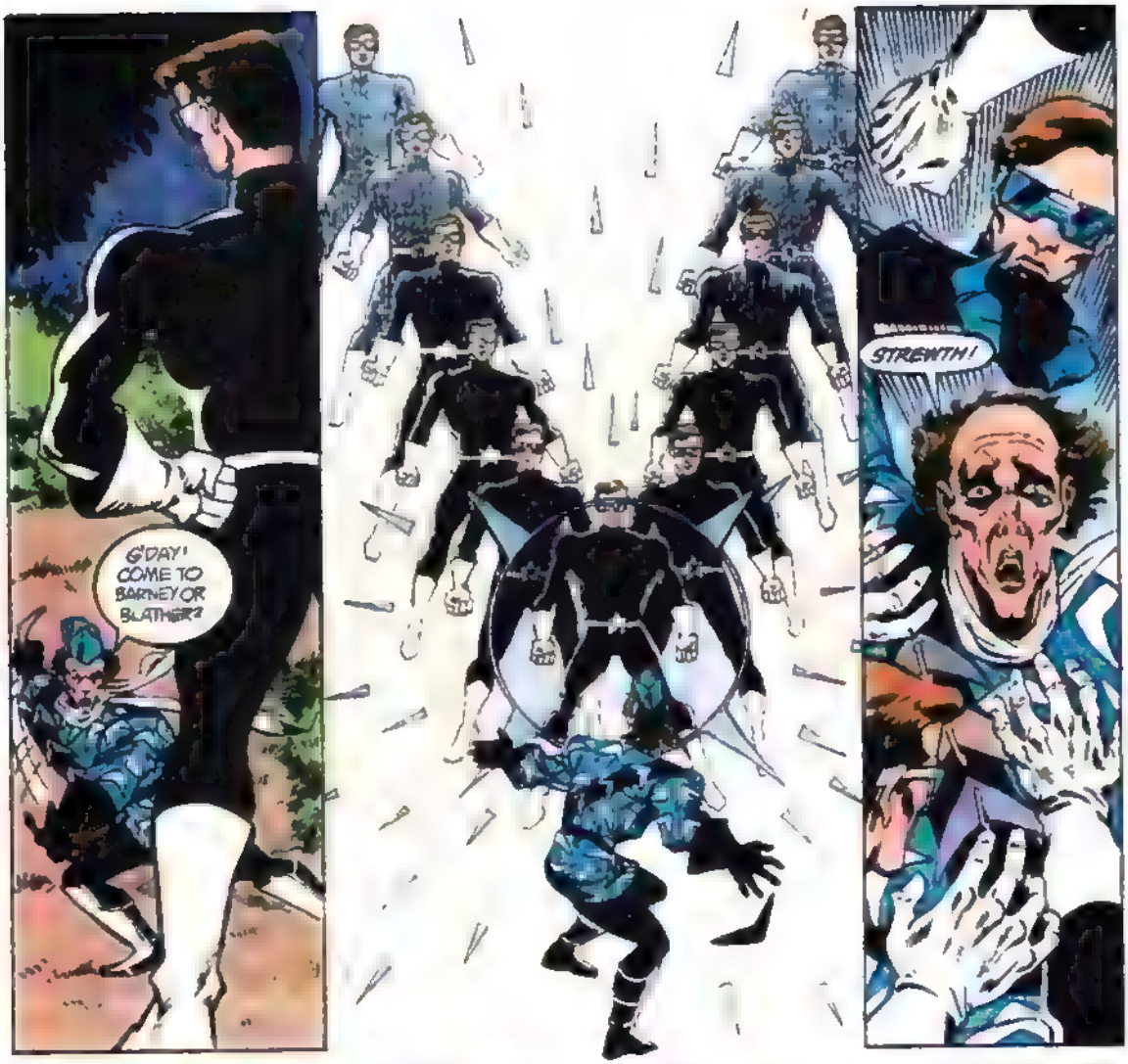

RRRUSSHKKK!

SNAP!
SNAP!
SNAP!

WELCOME TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, LUV.

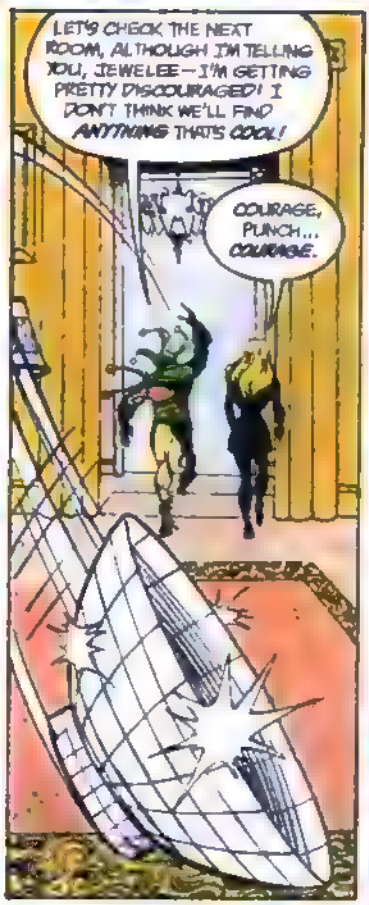
YOU KNOW, THIS WOULD LOOK REALLY GOOD IN OUR APARTMENT


NAUGHTY NAUGHTY! WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE STEALING A MASK!
NO ONE SAID WE CAN'T DO BOTH. LET'S TAKE A LOOK AROUND--THERE'S PLENTY OF LOOT AROUND HERE

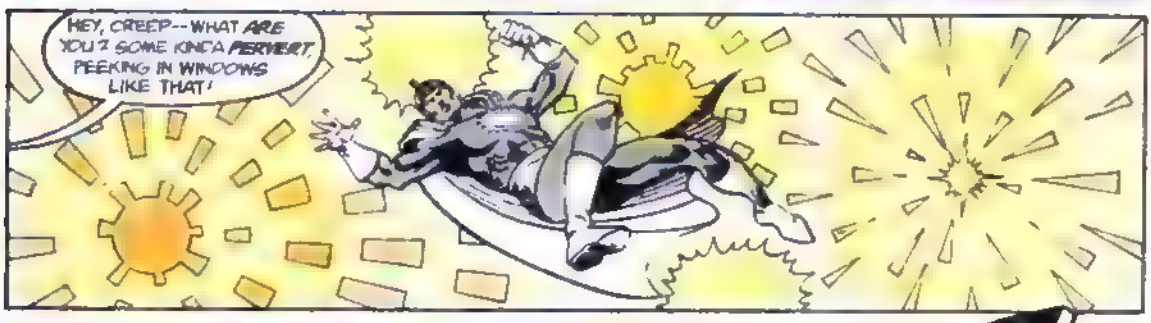

G'DAY! COME TO BARNEY OR BLATHER?
STREWTH!

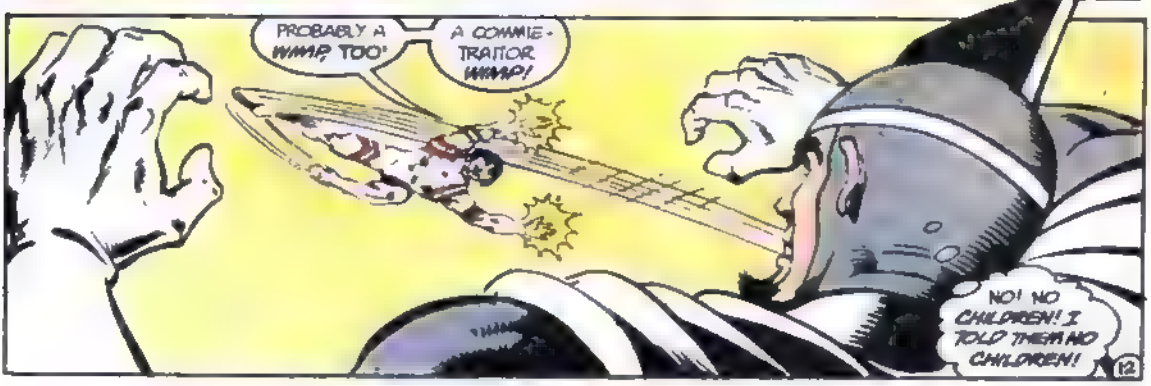
SO WHEN CAN WE EXPECT THE ATTACK, MAJOR?
PROBABLY TONIGHT-- PROVIDED OUR INFORMATION IS CORRECT
I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS, MAJOR. A CHANCE TO THRASH A BUNCH OF CROOKS AND CREEPS PRETENDING TO BE WORKING FOR AMERICA HOT STUFF!
THERE'S BEEN A LEAK. WE'VE WALKED INTO A TRAP!

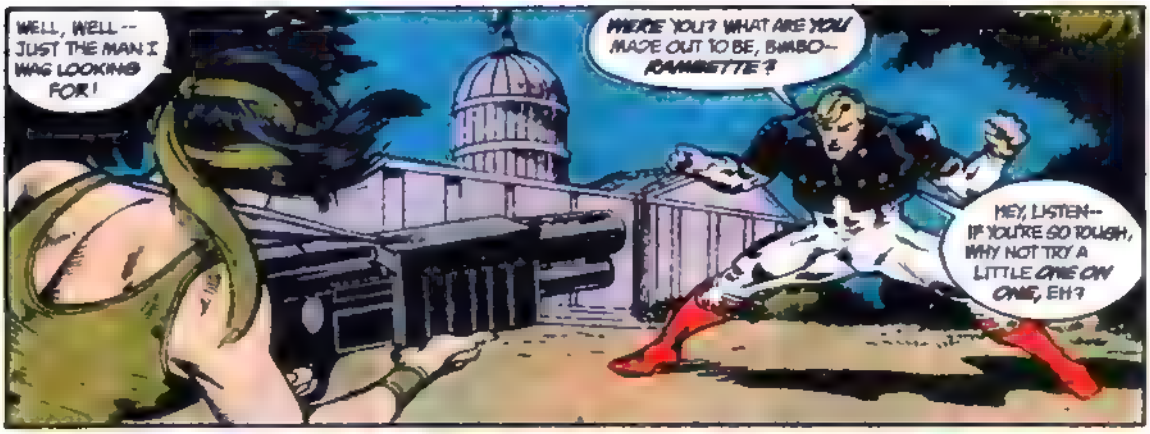
WOULD YOU LOOK AT SOME OF THIS STUFF? EEE-UUUUH!
TACKY, TACKY, TACKY-- EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK


LET'S CHECK THE NEXT ROOM, ALTHOUGH I'M TELLING YOU, JEWELEE--I'M GETTING PRETTY DISCOURAGED! I DON'T THINK WE'LL FIND ANYTHING THAT'S COOL!
COURAGE, PUNCH... COURAGE.

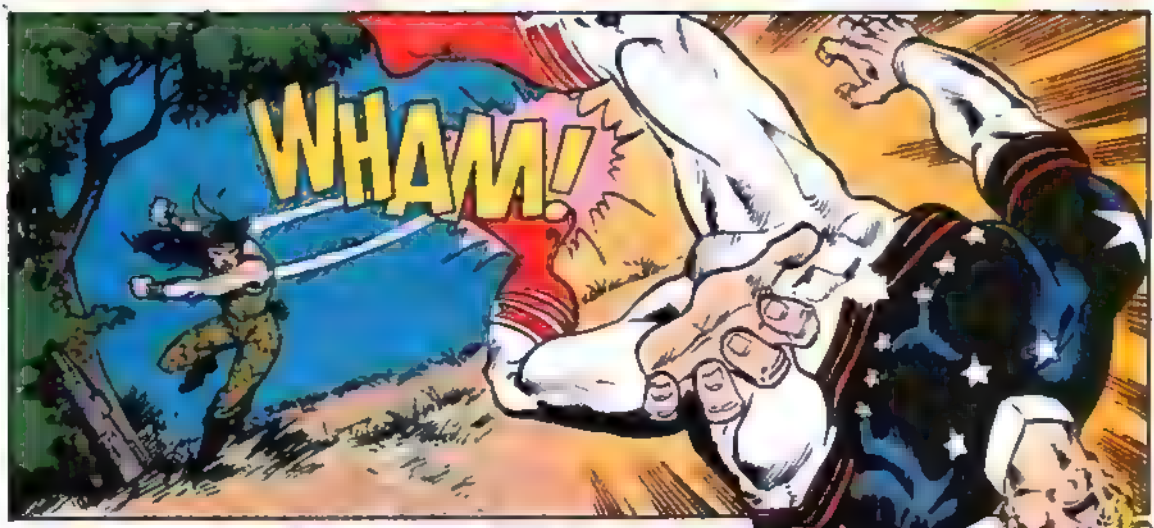
LET'S SEE... I THINK THEY SAID THIS WAS HIS BEDROOM WINDOW...!

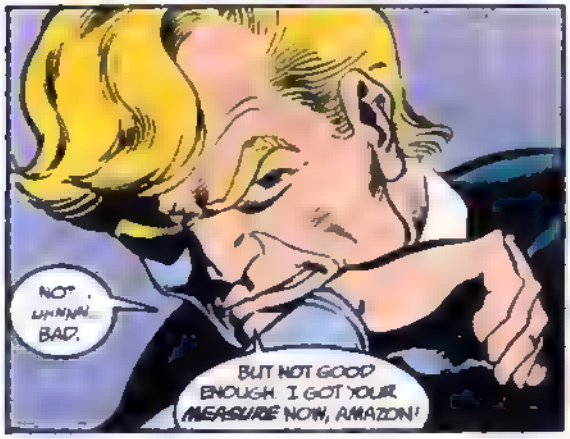

HEY, CREEP--WHAT ARE YOU? SOME KINDA PERVERT, PEEKING IN WINDOWS LIKE THAT!

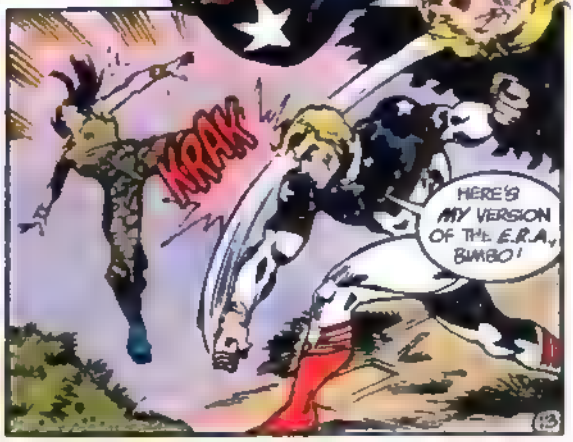

PROBABLY A WIMP, TOO!
A COMMIE-TRAITOR WIMP!
NO! NO CHILDREN! I TOLD THEM NO CHILDREN!


WELL, WELL -- JUST THE MAN I WAS LOOKING FOR!
WHERE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU MADE OUT TO BE, BIMBO-- RAMBETTE?
HEY, LISTEN-- IF YOU'RE SO TOUGH, WHY NOT TRY A LITTLE ONE ON ONE, EH?

MIGHT MAKE IT INTERESTING, AT THAT!


WHAM!


NOT UHNNN... BAD.
BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH. I GOT YOUR MEASURE NOW, AMAZON!


KRAK
HERE'S MY VERSION OF THE E.R.A., BIMBO!

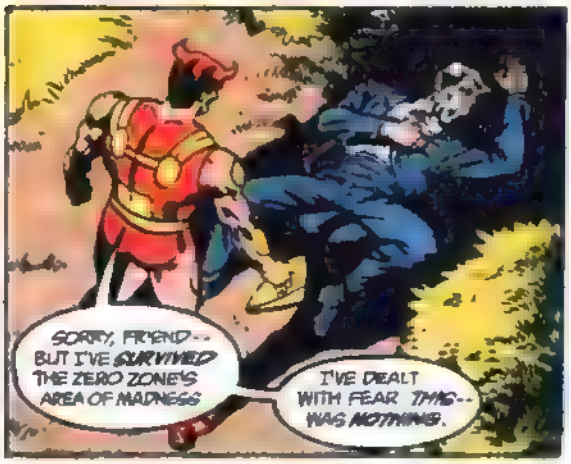
STAND UP-- PLEASE! I HAVEN'T BEGUN TO PAY WHAT I OWE YOU AND YOUR KIND!
NOR WHAT I OWE YOU AND YOURS
KRAK!
WORM! HOW DARE YOU?!
THIS WAS MY FIGHT AND I DIDN'T NEED ANY HELP. GO NEXT TIME STAY OUT OF IT!
WHATEVER YOU SAY... LASHINA
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

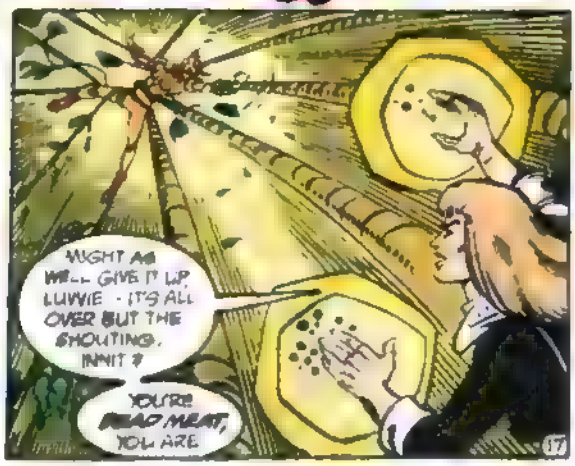
AH — THE RENOWNED COUNT VERTIGO, IS IT NOT?
I FEAR I AM AT A DISADVANTAGE HERE THERE HAS BEEN NO PROPER INTRODUCTION, AND UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES IF I KNOW YOU I MUST FIGHT YOU I DISLIKE RAISING A HAND TO A WOMAN
BUT I LIKE RAISING A HAND AGAINST IMPOSTORS AND HYPOCRITES!
I — AN IMPOSTOR!!! STRUMPET!
ARRGGHH!
HARLOT! INSULT MY ROYAL PERSON! DEBASE MY NOBLE TITLE!
15

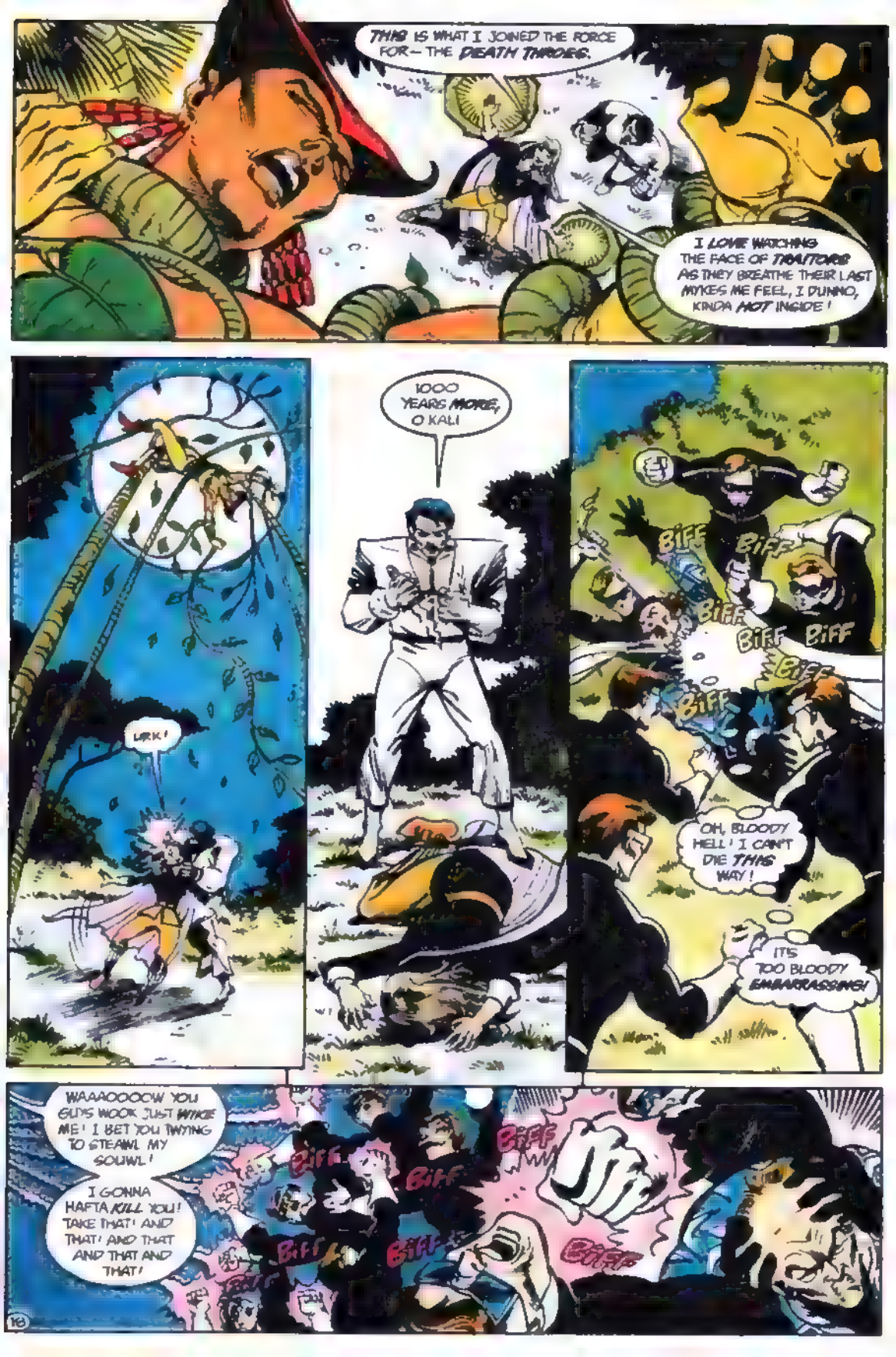
I FIND THIS WHOLE MISSION EXTREMELY QUESTIONABLE MAYBE I SHOULD TRY FINDING OTHER WAYS OF GETTING BACK TO META...
PROPERTY IS AT ONCE THE CONSEQUENCE AND THE BASIS OF THE STATE, AS BAKUNIN SAID.
I AM ABRAHAM LINCOLN CARLYLE-- AND YOU ARE TRESPASSING ON MY PROPERTY, INFRINGING ON MY PERSONAL FREEDOM -- MY LIBERTY.
GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH
PREFERABLY-- YOUR DEATH!
I HAD THE MEDUSA MASK FROM THE PSYCHO-PIRATE* AND LEARNED HOW TO USE IT BY WATCHING HIM. ITS MYSTIC PROPERTIES ALLOW THE WEARER TO PROJECT WHATEVER EMOTION HE SHOWS ON HIS FACE ONTO HIS VICTIM.
*THE MASK WAS LAST SEEN IN INFINITY INC. SPECIAL #1. PSYCHO-PIRATE WAS LAST SEEN IN ANIMAL MAN #10.-- BOB
YOU, SIR, ARE THAT VICTIM!
META! THE EMOTIONS I FEEL--STARTING TO TRIGGER THE M-VEST...!

YAAAAAH!

WUMP!






THIS IS WHAT I JOINED THE FORCE FOR— THE DEATH THROES.
I LOVE WATCHING THE FACE OF TRAITORS AS THEY BREATHE THEIR LAST MAKES ME FEEL, I DUNNO, KINDA HOT INSIDE!
LRK!
1000 YEARS MORE, O KALI
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
OH, BLOODY HELL! I CAN'T DIE THIS WAY!
IT'S TOO BLOODY EMBARRASSING!
WAAAOOOOW YOU GUYS WOOK JUST WIKE ME! I BET YOU TWYING TO STEAWL MY SOUWL!
I GONNA HAFTA KILL YOU! TAKE THAT! AND THAT! AND THAT AND THAT AND THAT!
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF
BIFF

BRIAAAOWWR! HERE COMES THE FIGHTER PLANE TO GET 'EM! AK-AK-AK-AK!
FIGHTER PLANES THAT USE LASER BURSTS DON'T GO "AK-AK-AK-AK"!
MINE DOES! IT'S AN EXPERIMENTAL FIGHTER PLANE!
TOOK YER OWN SWEET TIME GETTIN' HERE, DINCHA?
WELL, WE COULDN'T FIND THE MASK, SO WE DECIDED TO LOOK FOR YOU GUYS...!
OHHHH, JUST FORGET HIM, PUNCH! IF CAPTAIN BOOMERANG'S GOING TO TAKE THAT ATTITUDE, NEXT TIME HE CAN JUST GET HIMSELF BEATEN TO DEATH! SEE IF I CARE!
JEWELEE! DON'T GO OFF MAD! JEWEL-
BLEEDIN' YUPPIES!

OH, YOU'RE A REAL TOUGH GUY, WHISKERS! I'D HATE TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED IF YOU MET MAJOR VICTORY! PROBABLY WET YOUR LEOTARDS!
SPAKKOW!
SPAKKOW!
NO! I WON'T LET MYSELF BE BEATEN BY A CHILD AGAIN!
I WON'T!
I WON'T!!!
SHRAAKKK
I BEAT YOU!
I BEAT YOU!
A SWELL VICTORY, DOCTOR.
YEAH. A SWELL "VICTORY" ALL AROUND.
LET'S GO. WE'RE DONE HERE. THOUGH SOMETHING IN MY BONES TELLS ME THIS IS A LONG WAY FROM BEING THROUGH.
20

BLAST IT, MEGALA, LISTEN TO ME!

I DON'T KNOW *HOW* OR *WHERE* THIS *JANUS DIRECTIVE* STUFF COMES FROM, BUT WE'RE TREATING THE THREAT AS *REAL!*

WE BELIEVE ALL MEMBERS CONNECTED WITH THE *PROJECT: ATOM* ARE SUBJECT TO ATTACK.

SHOUT LOUDER *STILL*, GENERAL. I REMAIN UN-CONVINCED.

DON'T TRUST ME! I DON'T TRUST *YOU!* JUST TAKE SOME *PRECAUTIONS*, ALL RIGHT?!

PROFESSOR MEGALA?

SHWUP

SHWUP

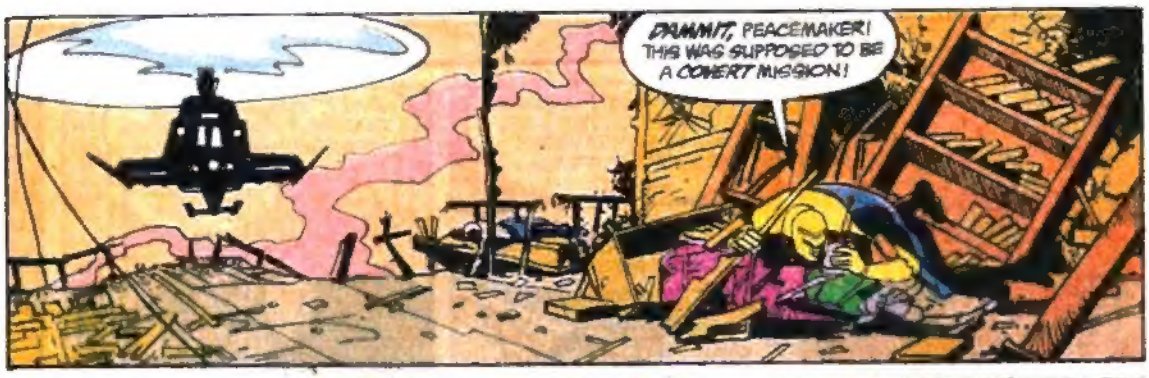
SHWUP SHWUP

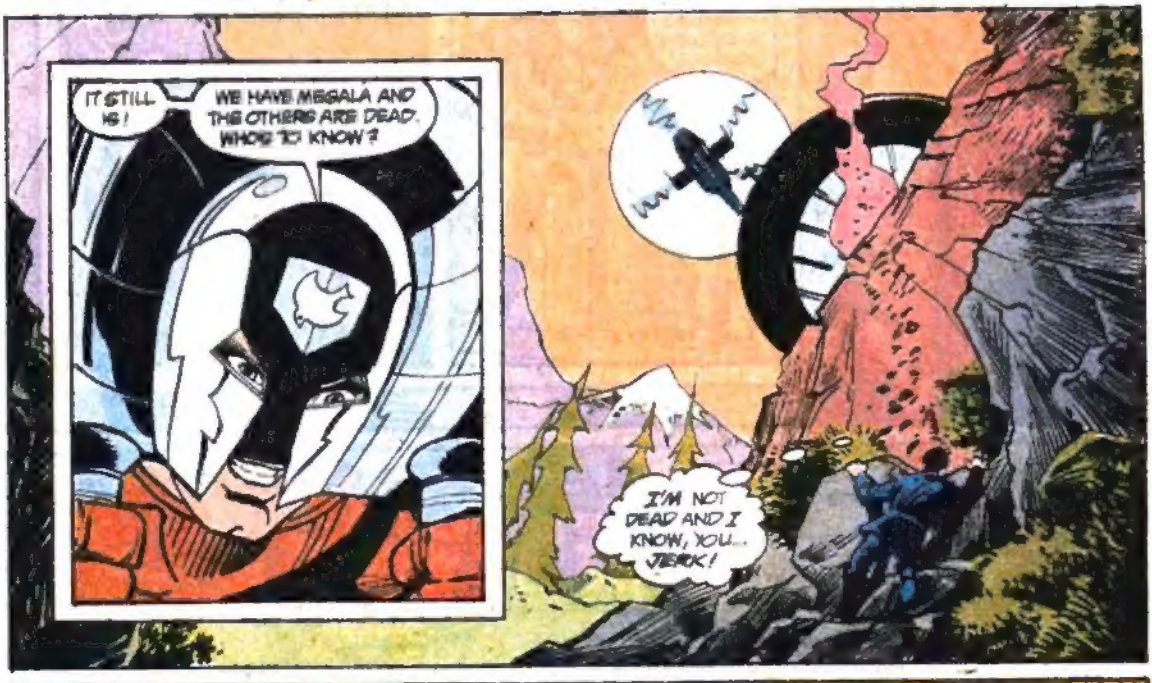
AAAAARH!

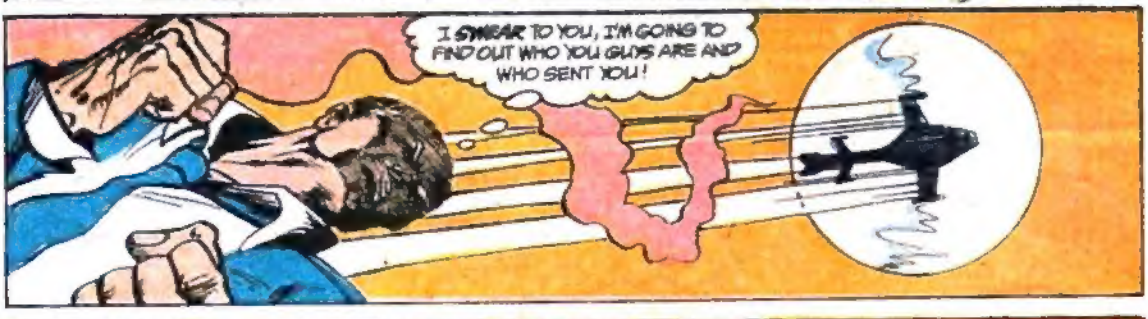
BRADDA BRADDA BRADDA BRA

WUMP

OHHHE!


DAMMIT, PEACEMAKER! THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A COVERT MISSION!


IT STILL IS!
WE HAVE MEGALA AND THE OTHERS ARE DEAD. WHOSE TO KNOW?
I'M NOT DEAD AND I KNOW, YOU... JERK!


I SWEAR TO YOU, I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHO YOU GUYS ARE AND WHO SENT YOU!

AND THEN I'M GOING TO NAIL YOUR COLLECTIVE BUTTS TO THE CEMETERY WALL!
NEXT WEEK: THE JANUS DIRECTIVE CONTINUES IN CHECKMATE! #16, GUEST-STARRING MAJOR FORCE, LOIS LANE AND BLACK THORN! IN TWO WEEKS: SUICIDE SQUAD #28 -- THE HAND BEHIND THE JANUS DIRECTIVE REVEALED!

SUICIDE NOTES

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L-3643

With the book going bi-weekly for two months, starting this issue, we're going to use the two extra letter columns to look at some mail on the Annual and in #29 the DEADSHOT mini-series. See, we don't lose your mail, we just let it get dusty. Onward ...

Dear Bob,

I never predicted a "flashy spectacular" for the Squad's confrontation with Argent. After all, they were supposed to be strictly civilian. I was probably expecting two or three issues of subterfuge and mystery, a major revelation and then an all out battle. Pretty tame for an 18 month build-up.

But you guys added a MANHUNTER crossover, selected panels from SECRET ORIGINS #14, a great art team, Kobra and Keith Giffen, called it an annual and made it a success.

Speaking of artists, is Graham Nolan related to Kevin? His work on *Psi-Force* is drastically different from this issue. It seemed a cross between Doug Rice and Luke McDonnell. Was this purposeful, or am I just reading too much into the art?

This Rick Flag (pages 15-16) is the one I've been waiting for. That and The Wall's feature made this annual one to remember. The way she dealt with her daughter and son-in-law was like a scene from *Gimme a Break* with you-know-who taking the place of Nell Carter.

Chris Hines
RR 1 Debert
Nova Scotia BOM 1GO
Canada

Actually, Chris, Graham drew the annual before his Marvel stint and he just drew his heart out. And no, he and Kevin Nowlan are not related, sorry.

John and I thought the Private Lives tale was better written than that particular sitcom, but who's to say?

* * * * *

Dear John and Bob,

Well, SUICIDE SQUAD has attempted to start its annuals off with a bang. I think, however, the explosion was somewhat less enjoyable than the Fourth of July.

I felt the story moved well, up to a certain point. The history lesson at the beginning, up to the point where Control decided to "disappear," went well and set a fairly good tone. The mission room sequence was also well handled. Lots of understated character bits.

I guess my biggest problem with the Annual was the ending. I expected a little bit more from Argent than this. The throwaway ending and Falcone's pat little speech put too neat an ending on something that is supposed to have been a fairly large component in the Squad's history.

As I said, though, I did enjoy the character pieces that we encountered along the way. Boomerang has apparently made yet another enemy of Shade. Of course, Shade is none too good at winning people over himself. Together, they could be the two least-liked members of the DC Universe.

Duchess continues to grow. While some letters have stated they think she's due to be mustered out real soon, I don't think that's what John has up his sleeve. I think the truth may eventually air about her being Lashina, but I also think she'll have proven herself a valuable asset to the team by then. And, of course, one of these fine days, Darkseid's going to realize that she's not dead.

"Family Duty" was also an interesting little piece of characterization. While I don't care too much for either Amanda's daughter or her son-in-law, I do like The Wall herself a little better now, especially her resolve in dealing with Tolliver.

Anthony R. Cardno
238 Center Drive
Mahopac, NY 10541

* * * * *

Hey, Bob,

Although I enjoyed SUICIDE SQUAD ANNUAL #1 I would have enjoyed it much more if I'd read it after this month's MANHUNTER. Instead, I read it before.

Why didn't you put some kind of blurb on the two covers? It would have been a lot less confusing.

Also, why did Todd spell Kobra with a "C"? It should have been Kobra with a "K".

Later

Uncle Elvis
17650 Dawson Road
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

You have us dead to rights. Why we didn't do the blurbs is beyond me and we won't let it happen again.

* * * * *

Dear Manhunters,

I must admit that upon first reading I was a little disappointed in Argent. I expected something a little more exotic, like a group of costumed sorts who acted covertly, much like Captain Atom's faked history. Instead, our bulwark against the end of the world was a group of beaten, hopeless old men, whose sole identity was determined by a dead man. It's sad and almost pathetic, but I can live with it.

Joe Decker
Route 1 Box 276
Lynn, IN 47355

I don't exactly think Control and his men were old and beaten when they went undercover in 1964. And if Control's been dead five years, then he ran things pretty tightly from 1964-1983 (plus the time before they went under) so their identity was very well established when he was alive. What they did and didn't do around the world has not come out but might someday.

* * * * *

Dear Bob,

I'm writing to inform you what a wonderful Annual you helped produce. Many times, a book's first Annual can be a trying experience, but as I've come to expect, SUICIDE SQUAD ANNUAL #1 was excellent.

I missed my favorite member, Deadshot; however, Rick Flag's all-business attitude helped somewhat. It was great finally knowing exactly what Argent is, or was, and seeing the Squad go up against the forces of Kobra.

Though I missed the crisp pencils of Luke McDonnell, I loved Graham Nolan's solid style. I wouldn't mind seeing Nolan's work on some regular issues. It is John Ostrander who is the true heart and soul of the Squad, and it was he who made the Annual so entertaining. In closing, I would like to thank you especially, Mr. Greenberger, because of your commitment to the books you edit, making all of your text pages among the finest in comics today.

Keep up the fine work.

Scott R. Pyle
502 Griffin Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15210

Thanks for the fine words. We're keeping up the good work as best we can and we think we're into a nice run

of stories currently. As for Graham Nolan, check out POWER OF THE ATOM each month for his wonderful work.

*****

Dear Bob,

A few words about SUICIDE SQUAD ANNUAL #1 (and MANHUNTER #6).

I have been stating in ACTION COMICS WEEKLY that SECRET SIX reminds me of *Mission: Impossible*. SUICIDE SQUAD, meanwhile, makes me think of another '60s series with a similar premise—*Garrison's Gorillas*. Think of it. That team was composed of convicts, chosen to form a special unit in World War II. The Squad was formed in similar fashion, wasn't it? Anyway, this story looked like something out of SECRET SIX, with Amanda Waller subbing for Mockingbird. I loved every minute of it.

I understand that Graham Nolan will soon be taking over DOOM PATROL. From what I've seen here, the DP's gonna see better days than when Erik Larsen draws the book (presently). No knock on Erik, but this guy has a better style. Nolan did a super job handling the Squad on this mission, picking up from MANHUNTER #6. John and Kim crafted a beautiful tale of deception and intrigue that certain books from across town are sorely lacking. After reading MANHUNTER I had no clue that Mark had been scammed both ways. Only after reading the SS ANNUAL could I see the true beauty of the story. Great stuff all the way around.

Private Lives: Amanda Waller represents the best work Keith Giffen has done, aside from LEGION and AMBUSH BUG, in quite some time. I cannot find the proper words to describe this touching piece. Amanda is a strong-willed woman, and needs all of that will to overcome the crisis surrounding Cray and Tolliver and the Squad. Which leads me to ask, why blackmail the lead of a band of mostly hardened criminals who'd blow the whistle on Task Force X if they felt they were getting a raw deal? Makes little sense, I think, but with this being an election year, I can see the subtle reasoning.

Keep up the good work. The SUICIDE SQUAD is the most underrated title on DC's hit parade, and should be noticed more often.

Jacob Gilbert
118 4th Street, Apt. 1
Troy, NY 12180

*****

Dear Mr. Ostrander,

I just got the SUICIDE SQUAD ANNUAL #1 today and I thought it was the best story since issues #5-7.

The first page was a classic. Graham Nolan draws the best JSA I've ever seen and the cover was the best yet.

As for the story itself: I loved it! Having Argent pitting the Squad against Kobra was great!

Now, as for the characters themselves—Colonel Flag: I think he's gotten too cold and hard since Karin Grace's demise for his own good, and for the good of the Squad. If he keeps going he's going to get someone killed.

Bronze Tiger is one of the best members on the team but he could be developed more.

Manhunter and Nemesis: two of my favorite members along with Nightshade and Deadshot. Keep 'em just like they are!

Vixen: the only reason I can see for her being on the team is the romantic feelings that are developing between herself and the Tiger and *that* the book don't need, so get rid of her.

Captain Boomerang: kill him off, please.

Duchess, Shade, Black Orchid: I think all of these could be great characters if you give them time to develop.

Deadshot and Nightshade: perfect! Keep 'em like they are.

Captain Cold: I missed him this issue and I hope he is back with the team soon.

Marson Fedrick
P.O. Box 514
Ellisville, MS 30437

*****

Dear Bob,

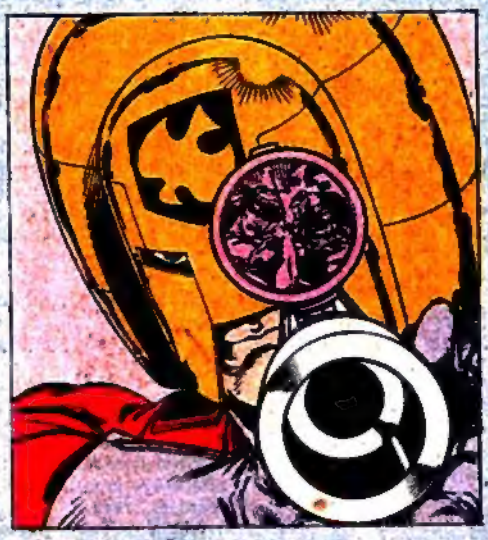
SQUAD ANNUAL #1 was fantastic. We got some great Squad action, the secret of Argent and Manhunter all in one issue. It's no wonder why this is one of my favorite books. The humor in the story was appreciated. Page 11, panel 4 and page 17, panel 5 and the "Private Lives" story were excellent touches. I don't want this book totally grim but I don't want the JLI either. The story was well written and full of surprises. John got me good on page 24. I knew Waller was being impersonated but I thought Nemesis *and* Nightshade were in there. Thanks for the great story and the great art.

Now for request time. How about a crossover story with all the government operatives? You could use Checkmate, Captain Atom, Peacemaker, and Danny Chase. In fact, you could kill Danny Chase. Please consider this.

George Gustines
100 West 105th Street, Apt. C2
New York, NY 10025

Actually, we thought of such a crossover before we even wrote the annual. While we won't kill Danny Chase (Marv likes him in the Titans just fine), you see that we killed some people this issue. And before this eight-week event is over, more will fall.

COMING ATTRACTIONS



In just another week, CHECKMATE! #16 will continue the action and adventure as Black Thorn and Val Vostok desperately search for vital information but may not be in time when Major Force is unleashed against the combined might of Checkmate. The Squad and Amanda are also in for the action as is an intrepid reporter from the *Daily Planet*.

Then, in two weeks, SQUAD #28 will conclude the battle against Major Force as the finger-pointing between agencies builds and the Squad is sent out on what may be another wild goose chase. And speaking of Chase, we find out *who* has them as we reveal the person pulling all the strings. You won't want to miss the event of 1989! Join John, Kim, John K., and Karl for the action.

Next time, a look at your mail on #23 and some more hype! Until then, drop us your thoughts on this story and keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger